

Symbolism in the Official Court Robes of the Ch'ing¹ Dynasty (1644 – 1911)

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Abstract

The Ch'ing dynasty represents the last stages in a long evolution of techniques and decorative themes of the Chinese imperial wardrobes (Myers, 1989:126). It was further asserted in the decree of 1759 which standardized the style, accessories, and motifs for the court vestment. This paper demonstrates the function and parables of the 'twelve imperial symbols'; also known as 'Twelve Ornaments', along with allied motifs on the court robes, in the light of Chinese philosophies, myths, and legends, as well as examples found in contemporaneous civilizations of the ancient world. Some of these symbols, like dragon, are very popular in modern fashion industry, for both fabric, and tattoo.

Key words: Chinese dress, Court robe, Textile motifs, Twelve Ornaments, Myths, Symbolism.

THE MANCHUS conquered China in 1644 and declared their ascendancy to the fabled 'Dragon Throne'. Their dynastic period is known as Ch'ing, meaning pure, who successfully established a foreign leadership. They remained, however, a clear minority; ethnically and culturally different from indigenous Chinese. The only way to maintain their national identity was to impose traditional costume while shunning² the dress of earlier dynasties; worn by emperors since the Han period (206 BCE-220 CE) due to an association with the Chinese culture and national discrimination³ of the Manchus. The new dress, however, was the combination of the Han-Chinese silk robes and the close-cut skin coat of the Manchus, best fit for horse-riding and hunting. They retailored the voluminous court robes but at the same time adopted the basic motifs and decoration of the preceding Ming Dynasty (1364-1644). Thus, in the early phase until the mid of eighteenth century, Ch'ing court robes were adorned with a large dragon on the front twisting over one shoulder and another on the back to the opposite shoulder. Moreover, the Manchurian leaders were already clued-up with dragon robes, and before the conquest they had acquired several robes from the Ming emperors. Evidences show that Ming emperors used to give gifts, bribes, and presentations to deflect northern barbarians as well as to the rulers of more civilized nations to develop good relations, and to stimulate the overseas trade (Cammann, 1943:191-4).

The dress of courtiers comprised robes, outer garments, surcoats, hats, belts, shirts, and trousers; among which robes and jackets were major ceremonial garments. Robes were obligatory dress for all men inside the court. The jackets were also popular in court; particularly the "Yellow Mandarin Jackets" which were a highest reward from the emperor, granted only to four types of people: loyal subordinates, ministers who presented rare birds or beasts to the emperor, senior officials with great contribution to war, and court envoys. The identical style of the Ch'ing court robes was long tapered sleeves ending with tight horse-hoof cuffs, narrow neck opening, side closures with a flap, attached collar, and slits in the lower portion.

The official court robes were divided into three basic categories: formal (*Ch'ao-fu*), semi-formal (*Ch'i-fu*), and informal (*Ch'ang-fu*). Formal robes were worn during the most important observances such as accession to the throne, imperial wedding, birthdays, and sacrifices to heaven and earth as well as to the ancestors. Semi-formal robe, the classic "DRAGON ROBE", has a considerable importance of all types of court costume. These richly embroidered robes were worn by all those who attended the court or served in the imperial government, in every semi-formal court occasion and official businesses. It was consisted of a full-length robe with side fastening

flap, tapered sleeves, and a hat with a simple apex. Unlike formal robe, it was completely covered with traditional motifs, particularly the dragon. Informal dress was used during some court entertainment or domestic events, or when traveling on official business. It was cut in the same style as the dragon robe, and was designed particularly for horse-riding with long sleeves and horse-hoof cuffs to cover hands. The new added slits on the four sides, loops, and buttons were specific features of the Manchu nomadic dress. Furthermore, court garments were divided into summer and winter robes which were treated according to the demands of weather.

Women had separate dress for formal, casual, and other occasions. Formal clothes were worn during weddings and funerals. Casual clothes were varied depending upon their function. The women's informal dress comprised two styles of long robe known as *Changyi* and *Chenyi*. The former featured a round neck and a panel crossing from left to right and, had relatively straight body with full sleeves while *Chenyi* was differed in that it had splits on each side, allowing the facility of movement. These splits were often highlighted with decorative borders. The basic elements of women's dress, however, were the same as their male, yet the formal robe was more sophisticated than their men.

Robe-making was a painstaking process and professionals used to spend up to thirty months to produce an intricate robe. Whenever a new robe was needed, it was commissioned by the mandarins at the Board of Rites⁴ in Peking. The design was sent to experts at Nanking⁵ if it was to be woven or was sent to Soochow for embroidery. After the required measurements, the basic motifs were traced through precut stencils. Then it was stretched onto a long embroidery frame or hoop. The designs were embroidered with floss or twist silk, gold or silver wrapped threads on silk fabrics – plain, satin, damask or gauze. Peking knot and satin stitch for filling, counted thread for gauze fabrics, and split stitch for details, were common stitches in practice. The patterns were outlined in voiding techniques. Each of the colour area had to be woven or embroidered from a separate bobbin. When the robe was ready, it was sent to Peking with details of material and number of hours consumed. The mandarins were responsible to approve the cuts and patterns as well as the finished robe whether it was fit for the emperor or not.

Symbolic motifs of Chinese textiles were more important than their skillful embroidery and rich material, since symbolism is a keynote to all Chinese decorative arts which reveals the essence of a particular culture. Likewise, these patterns were more than being ornamental, and memorize tales from history and legends, denote social contexts, and convey ethical messages. The dress also defined the imperial hierarchy in the court, and social status in the society. This stylization and distinction was more apparent in the Chou dynasty (1045?–256 BCE) where variety of clothing appeared for various occasions. There were army uniforms, ceremonial outfits, bereavement cloths, and sacrificial dresses.

The emperor's court robe was a symbol in itself and the significant motifs affirm it profoundly. Of these eminent symbols, the 'TWELVE ORNAMENTS' more precisely describe court robe as the most elaborate, and auspicious gown ever since. These ornaments were embroidered or printed exclusively on textile fabrics, and were the utmost means of distinction. Only emperor had the right to wear all the twelve. Officials and nobles had fewer according to their ranks (Hall, 1996:156-7), such as the first rank was restricted from the sun, moon, and stars; and further such restriction made five groups among the officials. The distinction was also evident in Chinese interiors where the privileged classes had specific motifs on table cloths, cushions, and other decorative fabrics inside their rooms.

The twelve symbols are referred to the Emperor Shun (late 3rd millennium BCE) as saying, "I wish to see the emblematic figures of the ancients: the sun, the moon, the stars, the dragon, and the

flowery fowl, which are depicted on the upper garment; the temple-cup, the aquatic grass, the flames, the grain of rice, the hatchet, and the symbol of distinction, which are embroidered on the lower garment."(Williams, 1976: 409-11) Further he describes that these are symbols of the qualities required for a good ruler. The original meanings of these symbols, however, are unknown and they have been considered as sacrificial symbols, worn by the emperor during presenting his people before the heaven. This concept was vague among the Manchus. Ch'ing-lung (r. 1736-95) was the first sovereign to bring back these ornaments to the court garments. These motifs⁶ were dispersed on the robe with great symmetry, a noteworthy element of Chinese art and architecture. They were composed in such a way that five of them were visible on the front and five were shown on the back, while two were depicted on both shoulders (*Figure 1*). They are deduced in succeeding lines.

A red disk, embroidered on the left shoulder is representing the SUN which encloses a distinctive RAVEN; more like a ROOSTER (*Figure 2a*). This typical sunbird was appeared in the legend of HOU YI⁷, the divine archer who shot down nine of ten suns in the form of a three-legged⁸ raven; that rebelled and risen from the tree of east horizon together against their routine, and scorched the earth (Cotterell & Storm, 2003: 483,488ff esp. 488-9). In Japan, a three-legged crow is the messenger of sun-goddess Amaterasu; an influence of Taoist belief. In many other cultures, too, crow or raven emerged as a messenger such as Huginn and Muninn⁹ of Odin, or in the MYTH OF FLOOD where a raven was sent after dove and swallow to ensure dry land (*Ibid.* 277, 327).

However, the sunbird is less important rather than the sun itself, and it is remained only a commemorative element of the sun-disk. Inasmuch as sun is the main source of light and warmth, and being displayed on the court robe, it symbolizes the emperor, his superamacy, enlightenment, and power.

The MOON-DISK, another celestial motif, embroidered on the right shoulder¹⁰ by a white disk (*Figure 2b*). It symbolizes the light and wisdom of the emperor, shining upon the world. Like raven in the sun, the moon encloses a legendary HARE (f.n. 7), pounding the ELIXIR OF IMMORTALITY with pestle and mortar near a PEACH tree, a symbol of longevity. The association of moon and hare is evident in numerous cultures. In Egyptian myth, hare is associated with the cycle of moon. The large patches on the moon are considered to be resemble a hare, an Asian concept; particularly in India where it is associated with *Chandras* – the god of moon who often carries a hare (*sasa*) (Harley, 1885:60ff). Of the moon celebrations, the Festival of Moon is most important; celebrated by Chinese communities around the world on the 15th of eighth lunar month, where figures of white hare could be found. On this occasion, the legend of CH'ANG-E is told to children.

CONSTELLATION¹¹ (*Figure 2c*) and stars are the symbols of the cosmic universe. They are considered deities who influence affairs on earth as Willetts (1958:269) quoted: "The destiny of the State is connected with the stars. Just as their constellations are propitious, the state is happy or unhappy. As the stars revolve and wander, men rise and fall". On the imperial robe, constellation is represented by three circles linked by lines above the facing Dragon on the chest. These are, probably, the 'THREE STAR GODS' also known as SAN HSING. They are FU-HSING, LU-HSING, and SHOU-HSING, associated with happiness, employee or salaries, and longevity, respectively (Cotterell & Storm:472; cf. Hall: 108). Constellations are symbolizing an unending source of love and pardon of the emperor.

Above the principal dragon on the back, a stylized motif of MOUNTAIN or ROCK (*Figure 4a*) is depicted which symbolizing the stability, and constancy of the emperor. It is also the symbol of earth and provides links to the heaven. Like many other cultures, from Mesopotamia, Egypt, and

Greek to India, Japan, and China itself, Mountains have an association with gods and goddesses. The mountain-like ZIGGURATS and PYRAMIDS, the Mt. OLYMPUS, Mt. KAILASA, and Mt. FUJIYAMA, all have a connection in some way or other to the heaven and gods. In China, 'FIVE SACRED MOUNTAINS' are related to 'FIVE DIRECTIONS'. These sacred peaks are: TAI SHAN in the east, HUA SHAN in the west, northern HENG SHAN and, southern Heng Shan while SONG SHAN in the center. They are considered as the abode of immortals, and worshipped as deities where pilgrims climbed to the summit to perform sacrifices (Cotterell & Storm:492).

In the lower portion of the garment on four slits; center front, back, and sides, triple-peaked mountains are emerging from foamy waves of water. Here it symbolizes the primordial world as well as protection of the emperor's regency from four directions. In addition, sun, moon, stars, and mountain represent earth and heaven where the emperor was ruling both on land and sky (Cammann, 1979:7).

To the right hand side near the large facing dragon on the back, is a small motif depicting a PAIR OF DRAGONS in ascending and descending position (*Figure 3a*). The imperial dragon had five claws¹² which distinguish it from those of the courtiers where four or three-clawed dragons were depicted. Besides this motif, the image of dragon was repeated nine times on the court robe – one large facing dragon on the chest and another on the back while two on either shoulder. Two dragons in profile view in lower portion, and two on the back in the same location. Another dragon was behind the flap on breast. In this way five dragons were visible to observe from front or behind; as the number five and nine were considered lucky, and associated with the dignity of throne. Dragon was often depicted with the FLAMING PEARL, the symbol of wisdom.

Dragon is China's most celebrated symbol in traditional arts and costume of all times. It was quite popular motif on ritual bronze utensils in the Shang and Chou dynasties, where *K'uei*¹³ dragon was depicted to restrain influences against the sin of greed. The earliest literary records describe this mythical animal as the greatest scaled animal, and visually a composite of parts from nine animals: the head of a camel, the horns of a deer, the eyes of a rabbit, neck like a snake, abdomen of a cockle, scales of a large carp, ears of an ox, the claws of an eagle, and the paws of a tiger. Moreover, there are nine classic types of Dragons¹⁴, and nine dragon children¹⁵. It is associated with the watery realm and, according to Chinese myth; it covers itself in mud in the autumnal equinox, and emerges in the spring. Unlike the West, it is considered beneficent creature in China.

As an important element of Confucianism, the dragon was an emblem of emperor. Likewise, the dragon was national emblem of the Manchu state of the Ch'ing dynasty (*Figure 3d,e*). It also symbolizes the adoptability of emperor and his willingness to change laws to the needs of his people. Dragon and PHOENIX together are symbols of Emperor and Empress.

PHEASANT (*Figure 3b*) was the symbol of empress¹⁶ as the dragon for the emperor. It was embroidered to the left side on the back, in profile view. This long-tailed bird was often depicted with flowers and CLOUDS. Pheasant depicts the meaning of beauty and good fortune. In the Chinese bird lore pheasant is associated with the 'RED BIRD' which, by the T'ang era, became the most auspicious animal (Paine, rpt. 1997, 1990:113). On the court robe it symbolizes the cultural accomplishment of emperor and literary refinement. The dragon represents the animal while pheasant of the bird kingdom, and when together, they represent the entire natural world. In this case personifies emperor as the 'Lord of the World', also ruling over beast and birds.

AXE-HEAD, to the right hand side on chest (*Figure 3c*), represents imperial power to act decisively. Though it is a rare motif in textile but has a good number of religious, mythical, as

well as protective associations since ancient times. Its concept can be traced back in the ancient cult of MOTHER GODDESS OF FERTILITY on the Minoan seals of 1700-1500 BCE, as Paine (rpt., 1997:69) illustrated, identified by SWASTIKA¹⁷ or double axe (c.f. Hall:55). In China, axe is the emblem of LU PAN, who lived in the Lu state about 500 BCE, and is now worshiped as the GOD OF CARPENTERS. In Taiwan, the cosmic creator, P'an-ku is represented with a chesel and axe (hammer), through which he formed heaven and earth (Cotterell & Storm:466f, esp. illus, p.467). On the emperor's robe, it symbolizes the instrument of punishment and is an emblem of justice. It also depicts the meaning of emperor's courage in difficult situations, such as of life and death, time of war, and famine.

An abstract symbol, known as FU, represented by two E-shaped signs which were arranged back to back (*Figure 3d*) to the right hand side, near the large facing dragon on the chest. It was embroidered in blue and black lines, and was considered as the symbol of judgment. On the court robe, it represents the ability and power of the emperor to discern the right from wrong, and good from evil. In this way it is the symbol of judgment, and together with the motif of axe-head it declares the emperor as the 'Chief Judge' (Cammann, 1979:7).

Above the waves of Deep Ocean on the lower skirt, is a pair of RITUAL GOBLETS, decorated with two kinds of long-tailed animals: a TIGER that symbolizes physical strength and a clever MONKEY (*Figure 4b*). These animals denote the emperor's power to pacify any rebellion that may arise with courage, while the two bronze sacrificial goblets suggest filial piety, and respects for one's parents. It also means purity, impartiality, and imperial loyalty.

Opposite to the Ritual Goblets on the front, is an AQUATIC PLANT, adjoining the foamy water (*Figure 4c*), represents the spirit of water, and thus a symbol of purity. Moreover, the seaweed as water to make it grow, symbolizes the nourishment of intellect, hence a symbol of wisdom of emperor.

A tray of GRAIN (*Figure 4d*) was depicted in the lower right portion on the back. Hall (1996:208-9) describes that it was thought to be RICE but probably MILLET. No doubt it is, because the integrated philosophy of grain and food regarding the 'FIVE ELEMENTS', Millet has a position in the central part; associated with the YELLOW COLOR and the earth element. In this way, the motif being displayed on the robe expresses the emperor is the mainstay for the people to feed them. It also symbolizes the prosperity of the state.

The motif of FIRE (*Figure 4e*) was placed in symmetry of the Grain symbol, just above the bubbles of water in the lower portion. Despite its destructive aspect, in China, it is most often related with positive meaning such as speed and lust, and a symbol of zeal and intellectual brilliance. It was also depicted on the court robe along with dragon in the form of Flaming Pearl. On the court robe, it symbolizes the imperial power. In various religions and cults, since ancient times, it is manifesting gods (such as Hindu Agni, Iranian Atar; the son of Ahura Mazda etc.). Because of its warmth and light, in many rituals it often represents the sun or the sun-god.

Besides the 'Twelve Ornaments' imperial robes were also decorated with the motifs of suchlike creatures (*Figure 6*) as BAT¹⁸ (symbolizing good luck, joy, and happiness), BUTTERFLY (long life and beauty), CRANE (longevity, and long marriage when tow), PEACOCK (beauty and dignity), and the PHOENIX which denotes the 'FIVE HUMAN QUALITIES'.¹⁹ Birds were often depicted with flowers where four seasons represented through various flowers such as BAMBOO, PINE, and PLUM BLOSSOM for winter whereas PEONY or lotus for summer. Spring was represented thorough IRIS or MAGNOLIA, and CHRYSANTHEMUM stands for autumn. Some Chinese words were also embroidered on the imperial robe, such as JI, SHOU (longevity), SHUANGXI (double happiness),

WAN (ten thousand, happiness), and XI (joy) (Figure 7).

Though not necessary to depict all on a single robe, there were symbols of the Attributes of EIGHT IMMORTALS (Figure 8) of Taoism, particularly on priests' robes, which include FAN of *Chung-li Ch'uan*, SWORD of *Lu ung-pin*, BAMBOO ROD of *Chang Kuo*, CASTANETS of *Ts'ao Kuo-chiu*, FLUTE of *Han Hsiang-tzu*, DOUBLE GOURD of *Li T'ieh-kuai*, BASKET of *Lan Ts'ai-ho*, and LOTUS of *Ho Hsien-ku*²⁰. In addition, 'EIGHT LUCKY EMBLEMS' of Buddhism (Figure 9), were also used in the decoration of robes, such as CANOPY (symbol of monarch), CONCH SHELL (wisdom), VASE (water of life and peace), ROYAL BANNER (charity), WHEEL OF LAW (Buddha, his teachings and doctrines), PAIR OF FISH (tenacity, domestic felicity, and fertility), LOTUS FLOWER (purity), and the ENDLESS KNOT (eternity).

Another important aspect of symbolism in the official robes was the badges of nine ranks; known as 'MANDARIN SQUARE',²¹ which were awarded to officials after passing an intellectual examination for civil, and a physical test for military. The first civil examination was generally taken at the age of eighteen and mostly the wealthy families could prepare their boys for the examination. After completing the process the officer was highly honoured. However, poor boys have also the opportunity to become civil officials. On the other hand, military examination was based on physical test and the ability of swordsmanship, archery, and handling of horses that were important here. The civil ranks were distinguished by birds' motifs, while the military ranks officials were awarded with the symbols of animals. The symbols for civil ranks were: White Crane, Golden Pheasant, Peacock, WILD GOOSE, Silver Pheasant, EGRET, MANDARIN DUCK, QUAIL, and Paradise FLYCATCHER, respectively. While nine military ranks were: UNICORN, LION, LEOPARD, Tiger, BEAR, PANTHER, RHINOCEROS (seventh and eighth), and SEA-HORSE.

The Chinese were also very conservative in colour, another sense of symbolism, and they used colours for indication and status of ranks. The philosophy of universe was ordered of 'Five Elements', 'FIVE DIRECTIONS' and 'FIVE COLOURS' were related to these elements and directions. Blue (East) associated with Wood, mostly used by the nobles. White (West) was associated with the Metal and was a traditional colour of mourning. Black (North) was associated with Water element and wore by those have lesser rank. Red²² (South) has an association with Fire and was used during the rituals of marriage and birth. Yellow (Center) was associated with the Earth and was reserved for the emperor as he was considered the center of power. Other members of the imperial family wore various shades of yellow, how they were close to the center of power. The emperor's informal dress was often reddish brown, grey, or light blue. Green and pink were specific to women.

CONCLUSION

Symbolism that abounds Chinese decorative arts; the clothing, personal adornment, household artifacts, and various objects are full with rich meaning. However, the symbols in Chinese art are often in the form of *rebuses* – visual puns in which pictures represent words and messages. The punning of Chinese words is the essence of these symbols. By surrounding themselves with these symbols, many Chinese believe that their wishes can be fulfilled.

An overview of these symbols may implies for wisdom, wealth and prosperity, a harmonious marriage and fertility, long life, a distinctive status of one's ability – an emperor, an official, a military-man, a noble, and others. Also they have a strong connection with their religion, folklore, ethnicity, and tradition as well.

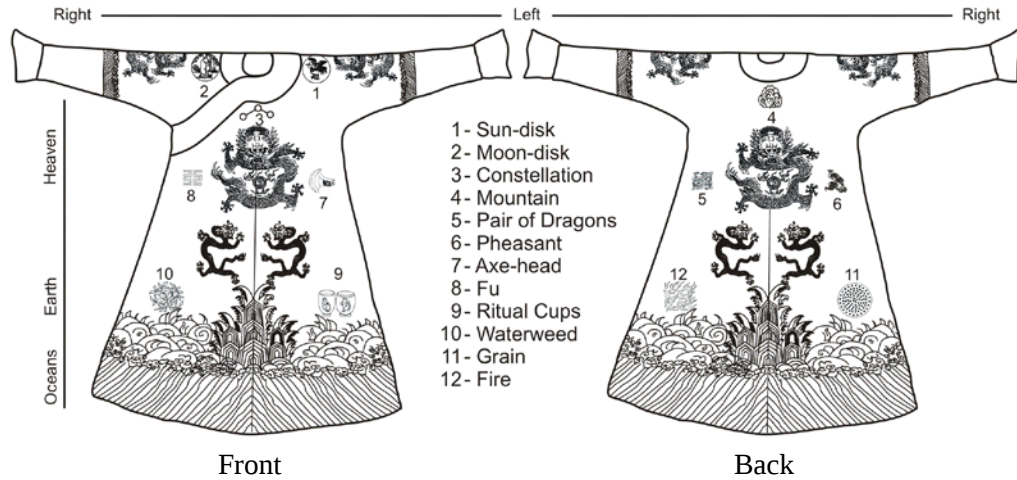


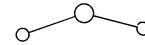
Figure 1. Scheme of 'Twelve Ornaments' on Ch'ing court robe



Figure 2. a. Sun-disk



b. Moon-disk



c. Constellations



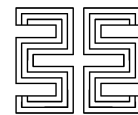
Figure 3. a. Pair of Dragons



b. Pheasant



c. Axe-head



d. Symmetrical Fu



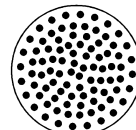
a. Mountains/Rock



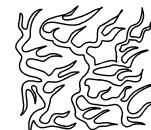
b. Ritual Cups



c. Waterweed



d. Grain

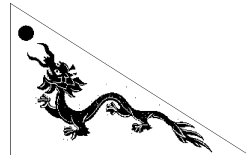


e. Fire/Flames

Figure 4. Five Elements



Figure 5. a. Dragon with Flaming Pearl



b. Ch'ing Flag (1862-90)



c. (1890-1911)



Figure 6. a. Bat b. Butterfly c. Crane d. Peacock e. Phoenix



Figure 7. a. Ji b. Shou c. Shuangxi d. Wan e. Xi e. Swastika

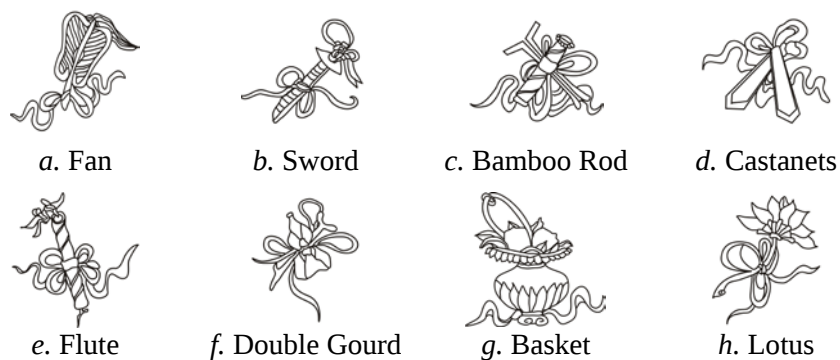


Figure 8. Attributes of Taoist Eight Immortals

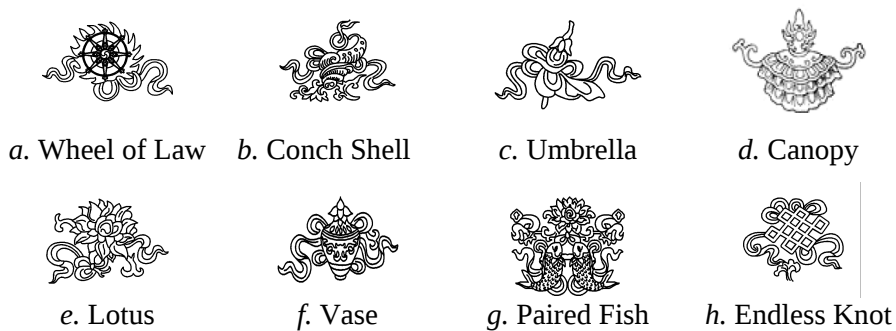


Figure 9. Eight (Buddhist) Lucky Emblems

Notes

¹ Chinese words are romanized in Wade-Giles system, best known to English readers such as Ch'ing instead of Qing.

² Because they were mountainous, riding and hunting people and the costume they brought with them was entirely suited to their way of life (Cammann 1943:189).

³ The Manchus warned their descendants that if they adopted Chinese tradition, they would lose their national identity and their dynasty would fall (Cammann, loc. cit.).

⁴ They were responsible for all matters concerning the court, such as periodic worships, looking after the welfare of visitors of the tributary nations and other court affairs. Sometimes, they worked in collaboration with the "Board of Works" and the "Court Colonial Affairs".

⁵ Nanking was the center of silk industry in east China, and in the seventeenth century there were 50,000 looms where thousands of workers were employed (MacKenzie, 1968:16-7).

⁶ Before Shang and Chou, these patterns were primitive and abstract, and their simplicity demonstrates an origin of ancient pottery patterns. Later on they became much neater and from the Ming and Ch'ing most of the patterns were realistic and true to life.

⁷ According to one version of the legend, the archer Yi, and his wife Ch'ang-O, once lived in the heaven. After killing nine sons (suns) of Hsi Ho and Taiyang Dijun; lord of the heaven, they were expelled from there, because he was instructed to only frighten and control the rebelled suns. Yi was happy, hunting in the forests freely, but Ch'ang-O grew bored that now. Thus she persuaded Yi to obtain the elixir of immortality from Hsi Wang Mu, Queen Mother of the West. They were given the elixir enough for two to live but Ch'ang-O stole and swallowed it, and floated to the moon where she became an ugly three-legged toad. Later on, a hare joined her in the palace of moon.

⁸ The sunbird (crow) is mentioned to be three-legged during and after the Han period.

⁹ Huginn and Muninn were two faithful ravens flew through the nine worlds collecting information and whisper latest news into the ears of Odin, a Germanic chief god (Cotterell & Storm, 2003: 203, 210f, 216f).

¹⁰ According to legend, when the corpse of P'AN-KU turned into elements, his left ear became the sun and the right ear became the moon. The placement of these motifs on both shoulders seems to be dedicatory symbols of that myth.

¹¹ Chinese recognized twenty eight constellations, seven in each of the four quadrants that comprised vault of the heaven (Hall, 1996:16).

¹² Chinese have five-clawed dragons, Korean four-clawed and Japanese have three-clawed dragons. According to legends, dragons were originated in China and went further, and if they traveled further they would have no toe to continue. For full description visit <http://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/dragon.shtml>

¹³ K'uei was depicted with one or two legs, and was different from traditional dragon known as *Lung* (five-clawed) or *Mang* (four-clawed).

¹⁴ *Tianlong* (Heaven or Celestial dragon), *Shenlong* (Spirit dragon), *Fucanglong* (Treasure dragon), *Dilong* (Earth dragon), *Yinglong* (Winged dragon), *Jiaolong* (Horned dragon) *Panlong* (Coiling dragon), *Huanglong* (Yellow dragon), and *the Dragon King*. For detailed discussion visit http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_dragon

¹⁵ *bixi*, *chiwen*, *pua*, *bi'an*, *taotie*, *gongfu* or *baxia*, *yazi*, *suanni* and *jiaotu*, ibid.

¹⁶ Another mythical bird, Phoenix is also considered as a symbol of empress and together with dragon it symbolizes marital harmony of the emperor and empress (Cotterell & Storm:435). For Chinese artists Phoenix is a composite of Pheasant and Peacock (Hall:38-9).

¹⁷ The swastika is vastly used in various cultures and societies since ancient times, such as Neolithic ; the Greek ; Christians ; Nazis (Hitler)  and others. For details see

Liugman. In Chinese language a sign , known as *wan* is a homophone of 10,000, and a symbol of happiness and good luck. It was often juxtaposed with lucky symbols in the scheme of women court robes.

¹⁸ Two Bats together means double good fortune, five Bats means ‘FIVE BLESSINGS’: long life, wealth, health, virtue and a natural death.

¹⁹ Virtue, Duty, Correct Behavior, Humanity, and Reliability.

²⁰ They were not deities but have become immortals following the Tao – Way.

²¹ The badges of ranks were embroidered in the center of a simple dark coat, worn over a dragon robe.

²² Saturated red was not utilized much because it had been predominant colour in the preceding dynasty; only shades of red were used by the Manchurians.

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